

is of Nearctic origin: a percentage of *C. melanotos* records from the western Palaearctic and Afro-tropical regions are probably of the Palaearctic stock, a fact which perhaps only ringing can establish.

Two other sandpipers, the Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* and Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii*, breeding in the Chukotski Peninsula are also correctly Holarctic and not Nearctic, as they are often incorrectly described.

19 February 1981

B. Zonfrillo

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What has been the cause of the present scarcity of song birds?

Having celebrated my hundredth birthday on 30 October 1980, I am unquestionably the oldest member of the B.O.C. and therefore the member best qualified to compare the status of bird life in England during the last half of the last century with that of the first 80 years of this one. The magnitude of the difference is truly staggering.

In the 19th century on any bright summer's day the air would be filled with the joyous song and sounds of a multitude of birds—a multitude largely composed of summer migrants which had come to our land to breed. To-day in the same place and in similar conditions one would be lucky if one heard anything more than the twitter of a House Sparrow.

Some have attributed the scarcity of our song birds to the large number which almost certainly must have died during the devastating droughts which are known to have overwhelmed the parts of Africa in which so many of them were spending their winters. Others have thought the cause was probably owing to the persistent and excessive use of pesticides by farmers and gardeners alike. These activities may have been contributory causes of their present paucity, but I do not think they have ever been the main one. I am personally of the opinion that it must have been largely, if not wholly, due to the result of consistent predation on the part of a single species—namely the Magpie. Indeed I am inclined to believe that the predations of that species may be having an ill effect on the whole of our bird population. There can be no doubt that the number of Magpies increased alarmingly during the 1914-1918 War owing to their population not being checked by gamekeepers and landowners, who were, of course, serving this country in the army.

18 March 1981

Collingwood Ingram

It is with the deepest regret that we have heard of the death of Captain Collingwood Ingram on 19 May 1981, as this number goes to press.

He joined the Club in 1901, in which year he first exhibited a specimen at a Club Meeting and contributed to the *Bulletin* (Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 12: 39). He attended Meetings up to July and September 1973, reading a communication on the latter occasion (*loc. cit.* 93: 97) and will be remembered by many Members.

An obituary will be published in the *Ibis*.